Nexus between Branding of Education and Parental School Choice: Evidence from Islamabad, Pakistan

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ARTICLE DETAILS

ABSTRACT

The educational system in Pakistan is in a dismal position ever since it was established. The government sector has lost credibility with the public and is no longer the first option for parents due to inadequate, consistent, and effective policies and basic infrastructure. Parents are actively choosing the private sector schools for their children. Since denationalization during late 1970s, the private sector has grown steadily. It has expanded during past two decades, establishing new standards for outstanding education, but concerns about the rising class divide affecting social equality have also arisen. The existing literature supports private schools' growing role in expanding enrollment and resolving quality and access issues, but little is stated about their influence on society. Private schools are subtly attacking social justice and equality by increasing the social stratification and widening the socioeconomic difference. Private schools' branding techniques influence parents' choosing a junior and a high school for their children. Most of the research in this field has focused on exploring how the problems of quality, access, and other variables influence students' decisions about which schools to attend. However this research is aimed at exploring a very basic issue: why are private schools favored because of their "branding"—the branding that has strengthened the status awareness in parents and school choice that has joined the realm of class conflict with several dimensions. The state's obligation to deliver at certain level of essential services has been privatized and sold out in the open market. The middle class's preference is migrating from public to private schools, with the goal of purchasing financial stability in order to gain access to a better-paying jobs and social circles. Today, schooling is not more than just getting an education; it's also a way to show wealth and social
1. Introduction

The importance of education as the primary component of the development is widely acknowledged. Many problems, including lack of curriculum, impolite instructors, and a fragile foundation, hinder Pakistan's state education system (Memon, 2007). One of the most pervasive problems in the public school system in Pakistan is the widespread use of flawed assessment criteria (Rehmani, 2003). Alternatively, students at private schools follow a curriculum that has not been approved by the public school system and are assessed by organizations with which they are unfamiliar (Andrabi, Das, and Khwaja, 2006). People tend to avoid state-funded schools because they lack essential amenities like running water, clean restrooms, manageable class sizes, and well-trained teachers, while favoring privately-funded schools for their superior education programs, guidance modes, and staff capabilities (Iqbal, 2012).

The population of Pakistan is highly stratified along ethnicity and religion, socioeconomic categories, different caste and biradri systems (connection organizations or meetings), economic standing, and occupational specialization. Industrialists, tribal leaders, legislators, government employees, military officials, business monsters, and experts are all represented during different public gatherings. Meanwhile, the impoverished group includes both elected officials and laborers who earn poor wages and have no access to land. There is a glaring and widening gap between the educational options accessible to these groups and the rest of the population. People from higher socioeconomic statuses may send their kids to private schools, while those from lower socioeconomic groups are sometimes forced to send their children to public schools owing to budgetary restraints (Malik A. H., 2012). Recently, a multitude of low-cost private schools that meet the requirements of the working class have embarked on efforts to catch up to the privileged class's educational infrastructure (Rehman, 2015). In general while discussing the Pakistan's education system, the influence of socioeconomic background on school choice is seldom given the attention it deserves.

Building a strong education system is like establishing the foundation for a prosperous society and a sense of morality in the nation. Based on the existing data, it is evident that such policies are contributing to an even greater disparity between the rich and the poor. While there is evidence that education in the hidden zone is higher, the social consequences should not be ignored. Their social and philosophical importance is reflected in the established social order. Students attending these top universities learn to effectively portray a wide range of characters in a variety of contexts, including government agencies, corporations, and nonprofits (Rahman, 2005). Because of the multitude teaching methods and parents' desire to enroll their children in schools according to their respective sectors of choice, selecting an appropriate educational setting has become more

*Note: The data and content of the paper is derived from M.phil thesis of the first author.*
challenging. Choosing a school has become more of a symbol of status than merely as a means, to ensure a secure future. Different grading systems have given private, for-profit institutions an edge. Everything in the training area is affected by "marking," the process of differentiating one item or administration from another based on a small number of features. It satisfies the needs for visibility, individuality, and expression. Keller (2009). Despite shifts in emphasis and understanding, basic marking practices have remained consistent. There has always been an air of sophistication and a sense of distinction associated with things bearing trademarks (p.153-159). Abram Maslow's "progressive hierarchy of requirements" (Huitt, 2004) suggests that consumers begin spending money on name-brand products after their most fundamental needs have been addressed. It is against human nature to focus on less urgent matters until the most urgent has been addressed.

To make a buck off of parents, the education industry uses all the branded features it can get its hands on. Students are now regarded as clients, while other universities are known as adversaries. Branding is being used by institutions to set themselves out from others and compete for students and financial resources (De Witt, 2013).

Meanwhile, educational business leaders have taken the practice of branding to new heights, resulting in the 'commoditization' of services that the government should be providing for free or at transparent prices. Opportunities for academic growth, involvement in the local community, and the chance to find better jobs after graduation are common criteria used to evaluate a school. Considering the frequency of screening in contemporary generation, one would wonder whether parents have a hard time deciding which school to send their children. Is it a desire for more knowledge or for elevated social standing that drives them? The growth of an individual, their family, and their country as a whole is reflected in the value placed on education. These days, schooling is treated like any other consumer commodity supplied to consumers for profit. Some parents have always had it relatively easy to decide which school is best for their children because of the financial reasons. Due to their focus on securing a comfortable financial future and respectable place in society, these individuals often choose tuition-based educational institutions. Parents' education, career, and financial circumstances all have significant impact on their children's school choice. In today's digitized, commodified marketplace, training is no longer a rarity. The purpose of this study, grounded on a survey, is to analyze how fundamental perspectives on school choice have changed over time in urban areas of Pakistan; especially Islamabad.

The study will describe that how the interplay of guardian's inclination, preexisting pressures and class struggles shape their decision. Does the „Branding’ of schools by entrepreneurs make students more likely to prioritize things like social justice? The study will analyze whether or not parents' primary considerations for selecting a school have switched from meeting fundamental requirements to fostering supplemental, corrective social qualities, and whether or not this movement is being influenced by the increasing commercialization of education; in other words what do buyers (parents) want? Also it will explore that whether they are receiving meaningful and high-quality education, or are they just gaining a label to attach to the children for better socialization and more privilege?

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

The success of a child's education has far-reaching consequences for his future, both
personally and for his family, as well as for global community. Diverse strategies have been used throughout history, with education playing a central role, to kick-start and maintain progress. During European industrialization era, schools were breeding grounds for production of skilled workers. Education during the period served to provide representatives and lower-level workers with the skills they would need to assist the world-class organization in effectively managing the enormous state. Teachers were seen as a "silver slug" by vote-based educationists in the 1960s because of their ability to mitigate class gaps and serve as a powerful equalizer. Almost every social, political, and economic problem in Pakistan can be traced back to a lack of education (Rahman, 2004), and there seems to be widespread consensus that increasing access to quality education is the most practical way to address the country's monetary troubles. At any rate, this understanding hasn't helped Pakistan to create an all-encompassing, workable educational system. True, our infrastructure is shoddy, our education system is flawed and missing essential components, and teachers in public schools are poorly trained and inept (Rahman, 2004). Pakistani legislature has been unable to construct a comprehensive and efficient educational system for the students, despite the fact that the problems have been identified and a number of solutions are available. According to one critic, "we have a very insufficient actual base, few instructors who are impolite and truant, and a flawed teaching technique in state-funded schools." Dropout rates are high because of rural culture and a lack of meritocracy, yet a select fraction of the country's elite have figured out how to equip themselves with a good education by attending expensive private schools. However urban poor kids are still stuck-up in failing public schools.

The connection between Pakistan's socializing class and its education system is rarely mentioned when criticizing the country's failing or poorly run schools. Even though many different educational procedures and programs are being practiced in country’s school system, little is known about their influence on the general population and the social services being offered.

Non-public schools are establishing themselves and expanding rapidly on one side, while on the other hand we see the state education system struggling with poorly equipped and underdeveloped instructors and non-adherence to a comprehensive educational plan, have earned the apt label of "ghost schools" (Tomaszewska & Shah, 2000).

Low-cost non-public schools have sprouted up in every corner of the city, in both provincial and metropolitan locations, to educate the lower and working classes, disproving the traditional idea that non-public schools are just for the rich. There is some evidence that private schools that charge tuition may give a superior education than public schools (Muzaffar, 2010). While the increased enrolment at private schools has been a boost for Pakistan's struggling public school system, its positive impact on social harmony and parity should not be minimized. Non-public schools of various types serve different segments of the population, strengthening the country's persistent social stratification.

The circumstance and the recursive pattern where "individuals from a population become split" are what meant by the terms "social division in classes" (Kerckhoff, 2001). Public goods such as education, healthcare, and other necessities of life are made more accessible to the economically poor, but this has far-reaching effect. Therefore, the wealthy can pay for high-quality education and other services while the middle class and lower class are priced out. Delineation brought on by
disparities in wealth distribution justifies disparities in access to top-notch academic programs. A respectable "identity" may be within reach for the children of the well-off if they are able to pay for a college degree (Rahman, 2004).

Social inequality or instability is a primary indicator of any community. A clearly delineated class structure permeates our society, and members of different social strata have varying degrees of respect for one another. In a developed market economy, income inequality is often used to indicate social stratification (Social Policy and Development Center, 2003). Sad to say, despite seventy years of independence, the state still hasn't ensured essential "uniformity in training" at the level required to prepare for advancement on the individual and public levels.

Those who have the financial means to do so, have their choice of school named after them. The educational climate may have an impact on decisions, but not everyone gets the same opportunities. Hypothetical research into global exploration (Kelly, 2009) turned up results for the United Kingdom, the United States, and Europe, but these results do not seem to be adapted for South Asian nations like Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. School choice was shown to benefit more affluent families in the United Kingdom, and this trend may also be seen in Pakistan. When parents make choices about their children's education, it might result in segregation based on race or socioeconomic status (Kelly, 2009). The apparent parallel is the separation of socioeconomic classes and social status in Pakistan's urban and rural areas.

People who advocate for a competition between public and private schools acknowledge that private schools with less fees may be a way out of poverty. The market for education and training services has ballooned into a multibillion dollar business where success in life can be purchased. "a range of choices will fall on schools to be effective producers of instruction" since it is a market (Astin, 1992). Non-public schools provide their students an edge in the job market by providing them with essential resources and a few perks above what is offered at public institutions. Private school advocates concede their model's potential to marginalize the already-disadvantaged, however it is the state's duty to ensure that all citizens have access to quality education and they warn that this marginalization may persist until the expert training is completed. Markets will take care of an individual's overt requirements, values, and premium if it is to their benefit. Kelly (2009) argues that the advantages supplied to individuals are outweighed by the negative social consequences that result from the framework that schools and guardians work together to build. 'School choice designs repeat the significant inequities that occur across ethnic, racial, and financial groups,' writes (Walsh, 2012).

Parents look for a "Decent School" when choosing a school yet what constitutes a "Decent School" differs from household to household and classroom to classroom. "Parents decide schools for a variety of reasons, but there is an agreement among them that a specified aim is "better enhanced student learning or results" (LaCireno-Paquet & Brantley, 2008) (p. 2). Due to the qualitative approach of this attribute, research on the factors those examined by parents while deciding which school was best cannot be evaluated. As a result, the results of the grading system are not infallible and might be misleading. The parents' evident expectations or values have a large role in determining the school.
Because of the various options available in the private sector, some people predict that a shift to tuition-based schools may encourage the best students and teachers to "drift" from the public sector into the private sector (Lacireno-Paquet, Holyoke, Moser, and Henig, 2002). Moving from the public to the private sector is a tendency that will exacerbate economic inequality. Government schools will devolve into dumping grounds for social outcasts and the economically disadvantaged under such a framework of separation system based on socioeconomic status and wealth (Goldhaber, 1999). Goldhaber (1999) argues that public schools’ principal function is to integrate students from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

When it came to their children's education, not all Pakistani parents chose the same path. Historically, Pakistani consumers in the market who had access to resources like money, transportation, and leisure time earned the greatest benefits from the country's decision-making possibilities, while the poor and the socially deprived faces less advantages (Andrabi, Das, and Khwaja, 2002). Parents care most about the quality of the education their children get, but they also value their children's health and the convenience of living near the school. Schools that charge parents for the privilege of educating their children are, contrary to popular belief, satisfying these fundamental requirements. The ideal situation would be one in which "similar instruction indicates that we are delivering each student exactly the same thing, and evenhanded training provides students everything they need to reach stability" (Nieto and Bode, 2012). Even if we assume that all other factors remain constant, the quality of child supervision and education in Pakistan will still vary greatly. It's not over yet, we're still struggling against our educational system, which is skewed and can't teach students well-rounded skills.

Institutions that charge students a fee have a reputation for being on the cutting edge of educational and managerial development. Parents' opinions on suggested schools are influenced by the variety of "verbal" suggestions made by their children. The choice pattern is heavily influenced by the general public's consensus. In addition, a research by (Bell, 2009) found that parents learn about the schools their children may attend and the quality of education they promote via their social networks.

In a world where people's innate skills are held constant, it's important to remember that the wealth or poverty; to which one is inevitably exposed, forms the basis of their whole experience. A sense of belonging to a select group of people is not something to be celebrated, as McIntosh (1988) argued in his study of Black and White schools in the United States. In a perfect world, it would be an unearned honor (p. 191). Although this dichotomy between the haves and have-nots is not pervasive in Pakistan, it does have a similar epicenter with the country. Those who consider themselves as superior as white Americans may be medievalists, industrialists, lawmakers, or even educators.

Literature indicated (Beal and Hendry, 2012) that parents consider a wide range of factors while deciding on a school. Having a sense of one's own social class may be crucial. One of the study findings in the United States, have shown that providing their children with a top-notch education is their top priority. Later on, other considerations such school cost, safety, location, class size, and the availability of friends from a same class at a similar school arise (Kleitz, Weiher, Tedin, and Matland, 2000). Pakistani parents have the same responsibility as any other parent. These parents feel their children are superior to those of lower socioeconomic status and hence do not want them to attend
Schools whose pupils are all from the same socioeconomic background are favored by the elite, who prefer not to have their children associate with those from lower socioeconomic groups. It has been shown that most parents have a preference for schools where the companion piece is either at or somewhat above their own grade level. There is a cause-and-effect relationship between being alone and deciding not to attend school. Parents deliberately segregate themselves by enrolling their children in schools where they would be exposed only to others from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. "strong evidence in a few countries that training markets exacerbate social class stratification by school" (Tomlison, 1997).

In Pakistan, a family's socioeconomic status has a significant effect on their child's access to and success in school. Evidence suggests that low-income parents are less likely to make informed decisions about their children's schools. They care more about the school's sense and closeness than anything else. Numerous studies have shown that high-income and well-educated parents depend on social networks, whereas low-income and less-well-educated parents seek information directly from the institution of education. (Holme, 2002).

Because of the modern trend for school branding, administrators are only allowed to see the children and their families as "viewpoint consumers" who need "nurture items or administrations that satisfy their issues" (Harvey, 1996). According to Foskett (2002), a growing emphasis on publicizing and praising academic endeavors has helped one group in its greatest strengths. As a result of working together toward the same objective, both the company owner/tuition-based school and the customer/parents may build trust in the "brand." The goal of every school in Pakistan is to provide students with a challenging and engaging curriculum that also incorporates creative approaches to teaching and learning and innovative means of measuring student progress (O &A level framework, IB program and so on). Also, it expressed itself in the establishment of hybrid institutions of higher education like Al-Huda and Dar-e-Arqam, whose stated mission is to combine rigorous traditional education with cutting-edge scientific inquiry.

In the world of profit and business, an idealized picture of the utility is presented to attract a certain class of the public, and on occasion, marking is employed as a naive entry-keeping strategy to keep the less attractive away. Schools' marketing campaigns may either alienate students with special needs (Jennings, 2010) or appeal to the parents of high-achieving students by projecting a positive image (Jabbar, 2016). Beaconhouse and City School's recent rebranding as Educators and Smart Schools, respectively, and Lahore Grammar School's development of milestone branches are prime examples of the employment of such discriminatory tagging to maintain control over the working class and lower working class.

General public now accepts the practice of branding and promotion in the education market (Foskett, 2002). In this way, schools are displaying their capacity to affect parents' decision-making in a targeted manner. Although advertising the school via tales of triumph over adversity and the transmission of false information to parents may give the impression that the institution promotes a harmful environment for its students, this tactics is adopted by many schools since it is very successful. Private schools trying to distinguish themselves tout their strengths, from the quality of their academic offerings and the accomplishments of their students to the convenience of on-site amenities like swimming pools and tennis courts. They brand themselves with one of two options to
offer their unique selling points. "offer more popularized resources than other sorts of schools" (Lubienski, 2007) is a claim made about private schools.

Exams have shown that utilizing visual enhancing and grading techniques like 'glossification' attracts a desirable kind of student population. British researchers looked into glossification via the lens of subjective evaluation (Gewirtz, Ball, and Bowe, 1995). The analysis studies at how the school's viewpoint and public image are shaped to entice students to enroll. Glossification is not a security of better overall quality of education at a foundation; it is only a technique of recruiting more parents but there are many economic, educational, and social status indicators in today's culture. Similarly, the population at large has divergent views on the value of the synthesis of companion bunches in foundations and the prospects available to graduates. Brand trust among parents should serve as a clear indicator of the impact of marketing and branding on consumers. Decisions are influenced by the parents' social structure, the school's reputation, and its closeness to the family's residence (Bell, 2009). The uneducated use of promotions and grades have further entrenched social stratification.

3. Theoretical Framework

The best brand theories may be traced back to the traditional sociological concepts. Several theoretical frameworks, including functionalism, symbolic interactionism and conflict theory, provide compelling explanations for the role that choice plays in the decision-making process. Functionalism, propounded by Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Talcot Parsons and Robert Merton gives a view that society is formed by a system of interconnected parts. These parts work together in a special harmony to keep balance and social equilibrium depends upon this balance. Society is like a human body where all organs are working in harmony to keep a healthy state. Every collective experience has the potential to serve as a unifying force in our complex social order. Successful companies, like Starbucks, play a crucial role in bringing people together in society. (De Chernatony, 2010). The theory of conflict propounded by Carl Marx (1818-1883) and Max Weber (1864-1920) says that social phenomena are part of a struggle between exploiters and exploited. Marx argued that inequality is based on one’s socioeconomic position the schools are privilege for some students leaving others unprivileged. The schools create and maintain a certain inequality in the society that serves the interest of the rich. Weber came a step forward saying that inequalities and conflicts in society are not rooted in economic status only. Conflicts are sustained in different distributions of status (prestige), power (ability to rule) and class (economic condition). In Weber's work, contemporary conflict theorists have come to see brands in a similar light, viewing them as a kind of social engineering that aims to blind the working class via the manipulation of desire (Ballantine & Spade, 2011).

The philosophical tradition known as emblematic interactionism, probes the connection between a person's essential self (I) and the person shaped by society, or the socially produced self. Brands serve as mediators for these two groups. They function as conduits for societal traits (Urde, 2003). When it comes to educational effectiveness, market theory specifies what parents and students should expect from institutions. The question of how much someone is willing to pay on something is a common one. The idea of being in the moment holds that a prudent individual would try to maximize gain while minimizing cost and danger (Henig, 1995). People may have varied opinions on how to weigh these factors of importance, chance, and acquisition, and no one can be called irrational for making a decision that differs from the standard one. A typical decision best
explains the peculiarity seen in students' schooling preferences. Everyone has the right to pursue happiness in whichever way he sees fit as a free citizen Hatcher (1998). The market hypothesis provides one of the cornerstone concepts in the study of money; the need of making decisions objectively. It is one of the cornerstone approaches having its own unique perspective on how to engage with people and communities via the application of a few central principles.

While all of the aforementioned explanations may help us understand why parents act the way they do when deciding where to send their children to school, it is the idea of product value that seems to make the most sense when considering parents' socioeconomic standing. To investigate, we use a monetary benchmark; the emotional theory of values and products (Menger, 1976). As Menger put it, "value... isn't something inherent in goods, no attribute of them, but merely the importance that we first quality as per the general propensity of our requirements... and, thus, continue to monetary things as the... causes for the satisfaction of our necessities" (Menger, 1976). In other words, a product or service worth is contingent on the attitude of the buyer. It's important to him in his own manner; therefore he chooses to cherish it that way. The emotional qualities and the causal relationship that link material commodities to the satisfaction of human wants are the basis of Menger's product hypothesis. It stresses the idea that people can change everything for their own abstract gains.

Theory of Value explains the first important fraction of value. Differences in the emotional weight assigned to various forms of satisfaction (Menger, 1976). The fulfillments that are most important to men are usually those on which the sustenance of life relies, and other fulfillments are coming later as per amount of relevance for the degree (duration and strength) of pleasure subject to them. If one's fundamental requirements are addressed, then one may focus on and save for more luxuries. The value that Menger attributed to labor and things was based on how much people thought they were worth in the abstract. Customers' ideas of their own status, judgment, and wants informed the decision to highlight the exceptional (Dimartino and Jessen, 2018). Advertising, according to Dimartino's analysis, is all about communicating the intangible value of products to potential buyers. In light of this, it is crucial that educational institutions present themselves in advertisements as being of incomparably more value than other schools that prospective students may be considering. Consumer choice literature demonstrates that without direct experience with the "benefit," a customer must depend on other signs to arrive at a value judgment (Duarte and Hastings, 2012). Advertising and branding become more important in the sphere of perceived value in educational settings. With the rise of for-profit educational institutions, parents and students are increasingly making choices about which institutions to attend based on their perceived rather than the actual value. Based on above discussion, following hypotheses have emerged:

**H1:** Branding and marketing of education is influencing the parental school choice.

**H2:** Parents are looking for quality education in terms of Good grades which in turn will ensure the admission in well reputed foreign or local universities ending up in securing a good job.

**H3:** Middle class and Lower-class parents want their children to have connections with high class. Selecting private school is for bridging the class divide

**H4:** Selecting private schools is buying a Brand Name in pursuit of high earning jobs.

**H5:** School Name has become a status symbol for most of the parents.

4. Methodology
4.1. **Data Sources and Study Region**

This study relied on primary data analysis. A questionnaire is designed following a literature review, to get the most benefit from this research. The information is gathered from the parents of school-age children. Parents of high and junior school students from various areas of Islamabad have been selected. They have varying educational backgrounds and work in a range of professions with varying pay grades. Respondents include salary class, foreigners, and company owners. Islamabad has a wide range of schools including government schools that provide native curriculum, private schools that offer international educational curricula taught in digital classrooms, and schools that provide religious instruction in addition to contemporary education. The role of madrasahs in socioeconomic stratification has also been studied.

4.2. **Sampling Technique**

Random sampling technique has been used to ensure the highest possible level of participation from all relevant sectors. Before the final research with 400 questions was done, a pilot study with a questionnaire having 20 questions was conducted. While conducting a survey, it is crucial to choose a meaningful sample. As a result, the lack of a database on Islamabad’s parents of school-aged children hampered our study. Although this limitation hindered the selection process, attempts were made to ensure that the sample was statistically valid. This research used a sample size of 400 respondents because for a population larger than 1,000,000, the minimum sample size required to achieve a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error is 384 (If population of school-aged children is between one thousand and one million (Table 1).

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4.3. **Research Design and Questionnaire Development**

Top – Down deductive approach is used for this study. Observations are based on a general theory and hypotheses are validated through the collected data. The deductive approach of the study endeavors to understand factors behind the parental choices of schooling based on Menger’s theory. The theory is validated by verification of hypotheses through collected data.

In order to get the most out of this research, a questionnaire is constructed based on an analysis of the existing literature. All questions asked are intended to be answered objectively. The respondents were not instructed nor briefed in advance. There were two components to this survey; the first section focused on the parents, including their background, family situation, and financial situation, as well as the children, including their educational experiences and where they go to
school. Whereas the second part assessed the factors that influence parents' decisions about which school to enroll their children in, as well as their level of emotional happiness in the face of societal pressures and awareness of a certain brand. To infer the outcomes, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies are applied. The dependent variable is school selection, while the independent factors are classified into four groups. These include social and psychological factors, as well as convenience, performance, and economic factors. Social and psychological variables include social pressure and school brand name, school branding methods such as building size of school, religious influence, and improved social relations. School distance (brand name accessibility), cooperative administration, and school amenities were convenience factors. Quality of studies (results - tuition based/school based), effort and teacher education (homework / tuition), student teacher ratio, and improved social skills and moral skills are all performance factors. Economic factors include household income, the number of children in school, better college admittance, and lastly employment placement, fee and service balance and class struggle.

5. Results and Discussions

5.1. Correlation Results

The analysis showed a positive correlation between parental socioeconomic level and their choice of an educational institution for their children. Students are increasingly dropping out of public schools in favor of private schools. It seems from the responses that many parents are unhappy with the level of teaching and basic amenities offered by public schools and hence feel it is essential to send their children to private schools that charge tuition. They anticipate an increase in their social position and salary as a result. To evaluate the validity of hypotheses, the Chi-square Test is used in qualitative research, while for quantitative analysis, Binominal Logit Regression is used.

5.2. Qualitative Analysis

Approximately 450 out of 500 surveys yielded reliable and valid information. To collect data from parents of varying socioeconomic statuses, a Google web form was also employed. Almost same percentage of male and female respondents participated in the survey, and the study demonstrate Islamabad's educated population as a whole. There are 87% college-educated dads and 68% college-educated women, with 60% of the latter being stay-at-home moms. The combined percentage of families in the upper middle class (those earning between 100,000 and 1,500,000) and the wealthy (those earning over 1,500,000) is 57%; this means that our sample is representative of both groups, as they are able to afford a good education because their basic needs are met and because they have some stable income.

To address the question, what form of educational system would parents choose if basic amenities such as a boundary wall, chairs, drinking water, electricity, graduated (BA) instructors and washrooms are available? More than 65 percent of parents made the decision to send their children to private schools. Almost 21.25 percent of parents participated in the study, preferences indicated that they were more interested in attending schools with larger facilities and more collaborative administration.

The findings indicate that private schools are concerned with economic considerations. 67% of parents think private schools are reasonably priced both in terms of tuition and other expenses. Approximately two-thirds (63.7%), think that they are actually charging for their facilities and
services. However, 91.25 percent think they are charging due to their branding. In terms of job security, just 40% of parents believe that a more costly private school would provide their children with a superior skill set to attend higher institutions and get well-paying jobs. Only 17.5% of parents stated they are willing to make the trade-off in school distance in exchange for a better education for their children. 63.7% feel that private schools charge for the services they give, and more than 77% believe that they have cooperative management to resolve problems that students and parents encounter while studying.

According to social factors and psychological factors, 56.25% feel that private school fees are unaffordable, while 91.25% believe that schools have become brands and are charging much for their brand name. 63.5 percent of parents claimed that they would enroll their children to private schools even if the public schools offered all the necessary amenities, and 85.5 percent claimed that they were proud to promote concerning their children's schools. Almost 20% of parents opted for religious private schools. Including the additional.

4.5% of students who have decided to attend a madrassa, this is not a negligible figure that might be ignored. In response to the question, what do parents believe education is for? According to 38.5% of parents, it is about moral values and knowledge.

The traditional role of education, or schooling, in a child's development has shifted from providing them with the resources they require to succeed in life to preparing them for higher-paying employment and social standing. 17.5% believe education is important for financial stability in the form of a better career, while 44% believe it is important for social standing in society. Your social position is determined by the social class with whom you associate. Attending elite institutions, and paying exorbitant tuition to do so, is one way that middle-class individuals try to bridge the class gap, while the elite are trying to maintain class distinctions by keeping the cost of attending these schools high. 73% of parents say that enrolling their children in private schools is mostly for the purpose of making social connections, while they are hesitant to declare that they want to be a member of that class.

This social aspect of class consciousness is evident even in very young children. Most parents (79%) think their kids are happy with the school they're concentrating on. Nearly 61% of parents believe enrolling their kids to private schools would improve their chances of getting into elite universities and landing high-paying leadership roles. Only 40% of parents claimed they think it's very important to learn something new, but that's too high to ignore in the grand scheme of things and shows the conflict between the middle and upper classes, with the former trying to conquer any challenge.

5.2.1. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1:

Ho: There is no association between school brand and school preference of parents

H1: There is an association between school brand and school preference of parents.
Test Statistics of Chi-Square

\[ \chi = \sum \frac{(o_i - e_i)^2}{e_i} = 29.029 \]

The value is significant at 1% level of significance hence we reject our null hypothesis which means that there is association between school brand and school preference and the strength of association is 0.27. This result correlates the two variables and shows that branding of schools has a significant effect on the school choice of the parents as a result of many economic and social factors.

**Table 2: Schools are Brands? * School Preference Cross Tabulation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools are Brands?</th>
<th>School Preference</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private School</td>
<td>Religious Private School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hypothesis 2:**

**H0:** There is no association between quality education and a good job

**H2:** There is association between quality education and a good job

Test Statistics of Chi-Square

\[ \chi = \sum \frac{(o_i - e_i)^2}{e_i} = 60.66 \]

Which is significant at 1% level of significance hence we reject our null hypothesis which means that there is association between quality education and a good job and the strength of association is 0.39.

Quality education which is considered to be provided by the private schools is a passport to privilege starting from getting good grades and ending up in getting good jobs. School Name or brand acts like a “name tag” which ensures preferential treatment in every field of life including getting jobs. Although the criteria of preference for jobs should be the skill or the educational degree acquired by the person but it has been noticed that along with the degree, the name of the institution does matter.
Table 3: Better Education * Job Security Cross tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Job Security</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Education</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 3:

**H0**: There is no association between class struggle and school choice

**H3**: There is an association between class struggle and school choice

Test Statistics of Chi-Square

\[ \chi^2 = \sum \left( \frac{o_{ij} - e_{ij}}{e_{ij}} \right)^2 = 25.08 \]

The chi-square test is significant at 1% level of significance hence we reject our null hypothesis which means that there is association between class struggle and school preference and the strength of association is 0.254.

The correlation between the two variables proves that the school choice is related to the ever going class struggle. Middle class Parents think that if their children will study in branded schools with the elite class children, they will be able to bridge the divide more easily and will finally become a part of elite class. Parents believe that the social connections they will build in the school will prove to be life changing for their children as these connections will determine their social status.

Table 4: School Preference * Class struggle and social connections Cross tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Class struggle and social connections</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Preference</td>
<td>Private School</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>171</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religious Private School</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public School</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>132</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Madrassa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 4:

**H0**: There is no association between status symbol and school brands

**H4**: There is an association between status symbol and school brands
Test Statistics of Chi-Square

\[ \chi = \sum \frac{(o_i - e_i)^2}{e_i} = 35.106 \]

The chi-square test is significant at 1% level of significance hence we reject our null hypothesis which means that there is association between school brands and status symbol and the strength of association is 0.296.

The correlation proves that the branding of education is at work in all the social arenas. Schools brands have become the status symbol in the society. As people strive to buy branded clothes and ornaments to feel elevated in the society, in the same way parents are trying to buy branded education for their children. Parents do it as they want themselves and their children to feel like a part of elite class.

Table 5: Status Symbol * Schools are Brands? Cross tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status Symbol</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 5:

**H0**: There is no association between school preference and family income

**H1**: There is an association between school preference and family income

Test Statistics of Chi-Square

\[ \chi = \sum \frac{(o_i - e_i)^2}{e_i} = 54.15 \]

The chi-square test is significant at 1% level of significance hence we reject our null hypothesis which means that there is association between school preference and family income and the strength of association is 0.368. This analysis shows that the as tendency to use brands increases with the increase in family income, tendency of sending children to private branded schools also shows an increase. It also signifies the status consciousness in well off parents regarding the school choice of the children.
Table 6: Family Income * School Preference Cross tabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Income</th>
<th>Private School</th>
<th>Religious Private School</th>
<th>Public School</th>
<th>Madrasah</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 50,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between 50,000 and</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between 10,000 and</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>above 150,000</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Hypothesis Results

H1 Branding and marketing of education is influencing the parental school choice Sustained

H2 Parents are looking for quality education in terms of Good grades which in turn will ensure the admission in well reputed foreign or local universities ending up in securing a good job. Sustained

H3 Middle class and Lower-class parents want their children to have connections with high class. Selecting private school is for bridging the class divide. Strongly Proven

H4 Selecting private schools is buying a Brand Name and has become a status symbol in the society. Sustained

H5 Parents having sound economic grounds tend to choose expensive branded schools. Proven

5.3. Quantitative Analysis

5.3.1. Logit Regression

\[ y = \alpha + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \beta_3 x_3 + \beta_4 x_4 + \beta_5 x_5 \]

Where Y is dummy of school preference for private school dummy is one other wise zero, X1 is family income, X2 is dummy of better schooling, X3 is dummy of school brand, X4 is dummy of social connections, X5 is dummy of good job.

Table 8: Logistic Regression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Preference</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Income</td>
<td>0.0000371</td>
<td>4.22e-06</td>
<td>8.81</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Education</td>
<td>0.5426859</td>
<td>0.2904951</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>0.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Brand</td>
<td>1.503776</td>
<td>0.4109245</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Connections</td>
<td>0.6309993</td>
<td>0.3105095</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>0.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Job</td>
<td>0.5726546</td>
<td>0.2980983</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>0.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-5.104927</td>
<td>0.6384387</td>
<td>-8.00</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ y = -5.1049*** + 0.0000371*** x_1 + 0.542 x_2 + 1.503*** x_3 + 0.6309** x_4 + 0.572** x_5 \]

Number of obs. = 400; LR chi2(5) = 203.33; Prob > chi2 = 0.0000; Log likelihood = -159.11971; Pseudo R2 = 0.3898
The coefficient of the model cannot be interpreted but the marginal effect of model is interpretable. The pseudo R2 is 0.3898 which indicate that our model is good fit model whereas as it can be observed from the chi-square test is highly significant used to test overall significance of model. Marginal effect coefficient of above model is:

\[ y = 0.000000661x_1 + 0.999x_2 + 0.326x_3 + 0.102x_4 + 0.1038x_5 \]

The above model is interpreted as follows: As income of family increase by 1% the probability of child being admitted in private school is increased by 0.000000661 which is significant at 1% level of significance. If a parent is conscious for better education the probability of child being admitted in private school is 0.999 then those parents who are not conscious, keeping other factor constant and significant at 10% level of significance. If a parent is conscious for school brand the probability of child being admitted in private school is 0.326 then those parents who are not conscious, keeping other factor constant and which is significant at 1% level of significance. If a parent is conscious for social conscious the probability of child being admitted in private school is 0.1201 then those parents who are not conscious, keeping other factor constant and which is significant at 5% level of significance. If a parent is conscious for good job the probability of child being admitted in private school is 0.1038 then those parents who are not conscious, keeping other factor constant and significant at 5% level of significance.

6. Conclusion and Policy Implications

Parents always had the educational choices of private and public schools in different forms depending on what the school offered, where they reside, economic status of the parents, and what they perceive as valuable. The concepts of equality and social justice for citizens demand the state to provide equal opportunities for education and occupational growth. Education is a public service and carries profound impact on occupational attainment of the individual, social growth of the society and nation building. State must provide and ensure “equality in education” at least at primary level to pave the way for development at individual and national level but unfortunately the objective has yet not been achieved.

School performance, social and economic status of parents, dissatisfaction from public sector due to environment and facilities are the major determinants of the school choice in the urban areas of Pakistan. West (2001), (Jackson & Bisset, 2005) and (Ungerleider, 2003) found that the reputation and exam results of schools are key features that guide parents’ school choices (relates to performance and quality of education). The performance factors lead parents to consider factors like getting admission in the good college and being graced with an executive well-paid job.

Parent’s perception of education is not that simple; they have a certain value of the good, i.e. education, they are paying for. Our study results when connected show a strong relation between economic security, social status and school choice. This also supports our theoretical framework of value of goods by Menger; that the real value of the good is subjective and it is relevant to the amount of satisfaction it gives to the buyer. The study reveals that the more educated parents, having sound economic backgrounds tend to choose private schools. This also is supportive of economic theory of Menger that the consumer first fulfills his basic needs and then turns towards
higher needs to get emotional satisfaction of a higher level that lasts longer. Using branded items, no matter they are clothes or education institutions is the feeling of being elite, being distinguished from the others and being superior. Branding is the concept of elite as it gives the aura of distinction and widens the class divide.

When talking about school brands and their influence on school choice of parents, one must keep in mind that that private sector jumped in to capture the market when the government sector left the gap. Now when chains like Beacon house, Lahore Grammar School and Roots have been rooted deep in our education system, the demand of the day is to revamp the public education system with the help of these private entrepreneurs. Public sector cannot compete but surely can collaborate with them through some policy initiatives. Public sector should invest in becoming a separate brand to compete with the private sector. If we cannot bring uniformity in curriculum for public and private sector, at least the uniformity could be established in private sector as per agreed guidelines. In addition to the curriculum, examination system should be revised and kept uniform throughout the country.

Teacher enrolment and training rules must be redefined to ensure the better quality of teachers. There should be check and accountability on all types of schools to monitor how much funds are coming in and how much is being spent. It is also necessary to control the ever-increasing school fee. The policy of one classroom - one underprivileged should be implemented in all private schools to give a chance to poor to join the race of rich and enjoy the facilities. Education environment and rules for public schools should be improved and more development funds be allocated to them for infra-structure improvement. There is a need to expand the franchised chains like educators to facilitate the low income groups of Pakistan as finances are the major drivers of expansion. Also, last but not the least, the Islamic education must be made compulsory across the board so as to reduce the reliance on conventional madrassahs.

References


